

Proletarian Unity League

2, 3, Many Parties of a New Type? Against the Ultra-Left Line

Preface

This book deals with the current Marxist-Leninist movement in the United States. It consists of an analysis of the recent history, present situation, and main tendencies within that movement.

The communist forces currently find themselves in severe difficulties brought on not only by the youthfulness and inexperience of their ranks, but also by serious mistakes in judgment and policy. While the effects of these mistakes do not as yet add up to a full-blown crisis, if left unchecked they threaten to cripple the communist forces for a number of years to come. For this reason, we felt it necessary to focus our attention largely on problems internal to the Marxist-Leninist movement itself. Since this movement only exists to serve the working class' historic struggle for emancipation, a discussion of the weaknesses of the communist movement naturally touches on other strategic problems facing the revolutionary proletariat. But the center of our analysis remains the anti-revisionist camp itself. We therefore address ourselves mainly to Marxist-Leninist groups and individuals, as well as to other revolutionary workers and intellectuals familiar with the nature and work of the movement.

In the twenty years since the first Marxist-Leninist forces broke off from the revisionist CPUSA, the anti-revisionist forces have set their sights on founding a genuine Marxist-Leninist Party to lead the multinational working class and all the oppressed in revolutionary struggle to overthrow Capital. Those twenty years have seen half a dozen parties formed, none of which has risen to the tasks before the revolutionary working class. In the past three years alone, two parties have formed and three other organizations now stand on the verge of declaring themselves parties. But unless these parties radically change their course, the working class can expect as little from them as from their anti-revisionist predecessors. Moreover, this splittist trend shows no sign of declining. The present essay aims to contribute to an analysis of why this has happened and how to fight it.

To further our analysis of what's wrong with many of the present approaches to building a new Communist Party, we have drawn on a number of

historical experiences in party-building. Though this is by no means a history of party-building, the argument does support itself on our study of the Albanian, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, British, American, and other experiences, and most especially the Russian example. We have concentrated on the Russian experience because it is one of the most instructive in its own right, one of the best documented, and also the most frequently cited example used by the dominant tendency in our movement to justify its own party-building perspectives. We refer to the Russian example often in the course of the book in order to highlight the original and relevant solutions the Russian Marxists under Lenin brought to the basic problems of working class political organization, and by way of exposing the "left" prejudices fostered by the dominant tendency in regard to this experience.

The first draft of this work was written in spring and early summer of 1975; a slightly updated draft under the same title has circulated in ditto form since the winter of '75-'76, minus most of what is now Chapter Five. We have benefitted from many helpful questions, criticisms and suggestions made by a number of collectives and individuals, to whom we offer fraternal greetings and sincere thanks. In particular we would like to express our deep gratitude to C.C. for comments and discussion related to the first draft of Chapter Five.

Besides redrafting whole sections, we have sought wherever possible to update references and examples as we did with the earlier draft. Though a few of the communist groups whose positions are still discussed here have already begun to sink into oblivion, their views have not lost their relevance. Even if some of these groups themselves have become completely isolated from the working class and other Marxist-Leninist organizations, the ultra-left trend they represent has not been defeated, but continues today in subtler, more dangerous forms. Therefore we have left in some less current examples where they serve the argument.

A note on the style: in the interests of greater precision, we have established a number of theoretical distinctions and used certain unfamiliar and sometimes difficult expressions. The first chapter in particular is a bit demanding. We hope those reading this will see the necessity for our resorting to a few somewhat difficult usages and occasional lengthy quotations.

Finally, we have not written this from some position above the daily struggles of the Marxist-Leninist movement and the working class. This essay began as a description of some tendencies in our own organization as well as in the communist movement at large. We do not exempt ourselves

from the spontaneous "Left" drift which affects the Marxist-Leninist forces as a whole at this time. By the same token, we regard this analysis as a largely incomplete contribution to the historic process of rectification which the U.S. communist movement must now undergo.

Nicholas Grafton
Roxanne Mitchell
Frank Weiss

for the Proletarian Unity League